

*The Eternal, the Atman—
Itself pilgrim and path of Immortality,
Self-contained—THAT is all in One.*

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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PATH and GOAL

(Quotations from Mataji's Sayings)

Steadfast in the patience and endurance necessary for Sādhanā, stride forward cheerfully with untrammelled gait, sights ever fixed on the One. That Heart-Indweller will have to be revealed both within and without.

Live vowed to abide constantly in contemplation of that. All other contemplation causes anxiety. The all-protecting Companion has already taken your hand, so why worry? Don't let your mind be drowned by circumstances. Drown it solely in contemplation of the one Supreme.

Man must aim at the superman, at real greatness. By the ultimate stepping forth, a pilgrim may reach the ultimate stopping place-at-Oneness. Here lies every human being's first and foremost duty.

He alone knows to whom He will be revealed and in which way. How the absolute-willed Almighty pulls anyone irresistibly to Himself along a unique path is beyond human comprehension. For each wayfarer a different approach. Often He removes sorrow by sorrow, or by a hard blow prevents a wrong turn. To advance truthward each needs his own path. "Own path" means self-revealing path, leading to deepest Selfhood, highest Goal Perfection.

Isn't it wonderful to be a hiker on the summit-bound path? This is surely the trail to follow. The all-illuminating Goal is reached exactly where the all-illuminating Path becomes entirely clear.



Mātri Vānī

(Dictated by Sri Ma as letters in response to devotees' requests for personal advice and guidance.)

Become drunk with Him, absorbed in Him, affixed to Him, immersed in Him, stripped naked before Him. Then only everything in this world will be recognised as His expression, as the One Himself, the field of His creative activity. He alone as action—with action and actionless, as form, quality, idea, mode of being and all the rest. In the universe and beyond is the One alone, enthroned in the posture of mahāyoga; He who is seated, Himself the posture. To realise Him in the world and beyond the world—this is the death of death; there indeed death is conquered, time quelled. To direct his course towards this and this alone must be the aim of everyone without exception.

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He who paints you black as a result of your karma, He Himself again washes you clean by your good and righteous deeds. Behold His compassion, His grace in everything that comes to pass. "I am a tool in His hands"—a human being who ever lives and moves in this awareness, through him no action can be wrought that causes pain and trouble. His is the path to true Being, his progress straight and simple.

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He who never abandons, never forsakes, to that eternal Bliss a human being must aspire.

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One's main duty in life is the remembrance of God. Try to depend on Him alone in every sphere of life. Whatever He ordains comes to pass, so utter His name at every moment. Time flies.

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This body is always near her wherever she may be. Ask her to write and make clear her doubts and questions. One should not waste precious time in idle gossip and useless work. Do what is essential for existence and talk only when necessary. Spend your time in japa, meditation, uplifting reading, kirtana, and so forth.

So long as there are outer personal problems, how can one make progress on the spiritual path? One should always dedicate oneself to God who dwells within so as to realise Him.

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When all work is done in the awareness of God and if this attitude then comes spontaneously, of itself, there is hope that the ego may lose its hold.

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The Calcutta devotees meet every Thursday for an hour's *satsang* with kirtana, silent meditation and reading of Sri Ma's books. They have named this meeting "*Mouna Milani*" (Silent reunion). Sri Ma was asked for a message. She said :

"For *Mahāmouna* (the great silence which is the Brahman), the creative activity of the mind practised in "*Mouna Milani*" is the instrument. To get a touch of that Silence this silence is observed; and the reunion to obtain a glimpse of the Union that eternally exists".

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The meditation, the Name that appeals to you most, that you should practise in order for attain to supreme Peace and Bless. Whatever Word or Name you love most and which expresses God to you that Word or Mantra will take you to Him.

MA ANANDAMAYI

Matri Satsang

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

(20)

The following is a report of the satsang that took place with Mataji at Ahmedabad from May 8th to 12th, 1957. From 8th to 10th, Satsang was held at the residence of Sri Mukundbhai Thakore and from 11th to 17th at the home of Sri Kantilal Munshaw.

May 8th, 1957.

Tonight during the hour of Matri Satsang, Goswami Mukut Beharaji gave a discourse on various aspects of the unique love between Sri Kṛṣṇa and the people of Vrindaban.

Mataji related only the following story :

Mataji : When in obedience to Lord Rama's instructions a bridge was built between Rameshwaram and Sri Lanka, famous warriors were engaged in fetching and dropping large mountain boulders into the sea. In the midst of this strenuous activity an insignificant couple of animals known as squirrels were also contributing their mite to the stupendous task of constructing the bridge. That is to say, after dipping into the sea they would roll in the sand and then throw off the sand from their bodies to seal the crevices between the boulders. Again and again they were repeating the same process. They were continuously engaged in this work and held no fear of death or injury from being trodden under the feet of bigger beings. Suddenly the following incident occurred : Lord

Rama's beloved messenger, the great hero Hanuman, spotted the squirrels and requested them to leave the precincts of those strenuous activities. But they were undaunted. Enraged, Hanuman with the toe of his foot, flung one of the little animals far away. The tiny creature screamed loudly in agonizing pain. Its wife at once went and related the whole incident to Sri Rama and asked for redress from the entire gathering.

Lord Rama had watched everything. Smiling gently, he at once lifted the wounded animal with his hands and lovingly stroked its back with his fingers, thereby removing all pain. He then asked : "Tell me, what punishment shall I mete out to Hanuman ?" The squirrel replied : "Wait a moment, let me first consult my wife !" Having obtained her consent, he cried out : "He Rama, just as Hanuman kicked me with his foot, exactly in the same manner, please kick him with yours." Sri Rama obliged. The little creature was highly pleased and said : "Well, Hanumanji, will you ever kick me again ?" Yes, "was the reply, "I shall kick you daily, and several times daily." On being asked why, Hanuman said : "For the simple reason that my Lord Rama will then have to kick me again and again with His lotus feet !"

Thereafter, Lord Rama assured the tiny couple of their safety, saying "You need have no fear now, nobody will in future be able to hurt you for my finger-marks will for ever remain engraved on your backs !"

At the urgent request of the gathering, Mataji started singing "Rādhe, Rādhe." So sweet and melodious was the kirtana that everybody joined, singing in unison with Mataji as if under a spell, and every fibre of their bodies vibrated in rhythm with the music.

May 9th, 1957

Question : Japa should be carried out in a sacred place, but where can such a place be found ?

Mataji : Where the name of the Lord is taken, sanctity will ensue of itself. Temples are holy spots graced by the presence of mahātmās are sanctified, their company is holy, and sacred are all places of pilgrimage. Some maintain that if japa is performed in certain pilgrimages, it will be crowned with success. God's name is eternally holy. Wherever the Bhāgavata is being read the atmosphere of the locality is thereby purified. If one sits in such places the mind will be cleansed.

Question : Why is japa done in a certain rhythm ?

Mataji : (Addressing Swami Madhava Tirtha) Pitāji, would you please reply ! It is advisable while repeating the mantra to meditate on its meaning. Thereby optimum results can be obtained, as stated in the Yoga Sutras.

Question : Suppose the pronunciation of the mantra is faulty how can I correctly ponder on its meaning ?

Swami Madhava Tirtha : If a seed mantra is repeated one need not meditate on its significance.

Mataji : One method is to perform japa while pondering on its meaning, another to dispense with all thought. The śabda Brahman, the akṣara Brahman is indestructible. Where the Brahman is, there is eternity, no decay. The word (śabda) also resounds, just as a musical instrument does. If through the continuous reverberation of the word, the japa becomes automatic, goes on effortlessly, the knots that constitute the

ego will be loosened and the path will open out for the undoing of the knots. The *Omkara*, the *śabda* Brahman is resounding constantly. Yogis can hear it. The sound of the seed mantra also goes on without interruption. By continuously practising japa, its meaning becomes clear. Just as sparks are struck by rubbing two pieces of wood against each other, so the meaning is revealed as a result of sustained japa.

Once an ignorant person was listening to the recitation of the Srimad Bhāgavata. The Sanskrit text contained the word "*Jagat hitāya*" (for the good of the world). But the foolish man thought it was '*jagat dhipāya*'. He started repeating "*jagat dhipāya*" with tears streaming from his eyes. Somebody asked him : "Why do you recite : '*jagat dhipāya*' ? What does it mean ?" He replied "It means that the whole universe is entering into God." While saying this, his tears flowed profusely and he was vouchsafed the vision of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Swami Madhava Tirtha : If the heart becomes purified, such events do take place.

Matāji : If one's heart and mind are pure, the significance of the word becomes revealed. This body says, if you can, lie prostrate at the Lord's door and keep on crying. So long as the door does not open do not cease from weeping and calling out to Him. Whether your body will live or die, give no thought to this. If there is force in your exhortation, the Lord's door will burst open.

Pitāji has said you should engage in japa while meditating on its meaning. However, some say, no need to ponder over the meaning. Continue to perform your japa full of faith.

It is said : "God can be realized by genuine faith—He is ever distant if one argues about His existence." This body always speaks in such an outlandish fashion ! Suppose you have preserved some ashes. If there is still fire in them it will burn again on contact. If poison is swallowed even unknowingly, the person dies. So, whether God's name is taken in implicit faith or in disbelief, whether one contemplates its meaning or not—good will certainly result from God's name. The remembrance of God's name destroys all sin. Some even maintain that the name of the Lord is so potent in annihilating evil that human beings cannot possibly commit that much sin in their lifetime. The same power to burn is in fire as in a single spark. One spark can reduce the whole world to ashes.

Swami Madhava Tirtha : The Bhāgavata as well as other sacred scriptures assert that japa removes the effects of sin but not those of merit (*punya*). The effects of merit earned by good deeds can be annulled only by *Ātmajñāna* (Knowledge of the Self.) What should I do to get rid of the results of virtuous actions ?

Mataji : The results of meritorious deeds are gradually eroded and diminish of themselves. What can be burnt will be burnt.

Swami Mādhava Tirtha : God's name consumes sin, while merit is consumed by rigorous penance (*tapasyā*).

Mataji : By whatever name you invoke God, whatever mantra you repeat—everything is contained in each, therefore anything can be achieved. If the knots of the heart are undone, what will remain ? By degrees everything will be accom-

plished. As Pitāji has said, all achievements are possible if God's name is practised truly and intensely. The divine name is indeed the Lord's concrete presence (*vigraha*). By His name all sin and suffering are destroyed. Such is the power of God's name that by virtue of it Reality (*tatva*) will be revealed. God is man's supreme friend, the very breath of his life. The Supreme Being is both with form and formless. If God's name is repeated, it is His very nature to reveal Himself. Therefore, whether with full awareness or in ignorance, whether willingly or unwillingly, whether with firm faith or in doubt—if God's name is adhered to, if His remembrance is sustained, what is to be burnt will be burnt and what is to be melted will melt.

People meditate in front of a photo, but what is a mere photo? Just paper. Yet, if pure faith is maintained in meditation, the Lord Himself appears in that very photo.

Questions : Is it necessary to keep count while doing japa?

Mataji : There is real potency in numbers. If God is invoked really and truly even once, He will appear right before one's vision. It is to achieve this genuine call that innumerable japas have to be performed so that at a certain juncture the japa may reach fulfilment. Who knows after how many repetitions your japa may bear fruit? Some perform japa with each breath. One should act according to one's Guru's instructions. If the Guru has indicated a certain number, who can tell at what time the number will be complete?

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In course of conversation Ma said :

Normally power is transmitted by the Guru through the

mantra he bestows, A true mantra has its inherent potency. The *Rṣis* or *Munis* were seers of mantras, they perceived mantras by direct perception. Those who have truly received mantras have potentially realized them. One can of course adopt any of the mantras found in books. But it is much more beneficial to receive a mantra from the mouth of a Guru, as with the mantra the Guru's power enters into the disciple. If someone has brought over from former births a bent in that direction, he may achieve even without the Guru's intervention. It is related that Kabir lay at the door of his Guru waiting to receive initiation. One day the Guru came out. Plagued by pain in his legs, he sighed : "He Rāma !" Kabir thought that this was the mantra bestowed on him by the Guru. He started practising it and eventually attained perfection. Words emanating from the lips of mahātmās radiate special power.

Swami Mādhava Tirtha : Suppose the Guru has enjoined on the disciple to do ten rosaries of japa per day. If one day the Lord gives *darśana* to the disciple after he has completed five rosaries, will he have to ask the Lord to wait until the full quota has been completed ?

Mataji : In this case the fruit of performing ten rosaries per day has been reaped after completing five rosaries on a particular day. Who can tell after how many rosaries the result of the practice will manifest ?

Swami Madhava Tirtha : My Guru started teaching me Vedānta immediately after giving me a mantra for practising japa. After a few years he made me realize what Vedānta is.

and then took back my *mālā* (rosary), saying : "You have no further need of this."

Mataji : Everything is possible.

Question : My Guru has taken away my *mālā* so that I should do japa.

Mataji : It is fitting to dedicate to the Guru the fruit of one's practice.

Question : I shall return my *mālā* to the Guru and He will do japa for me. Why should I not get the fruit thereof by the Guru's power? So it is just a question of the Guru's greatness. (Everyone laughs.)

Mataji : (pointing it out to everybody) Look, look, Balmukunda is on his knees !

Swami Madhava Tirtha ; He should be exempted from the commission.

Mataji : (Looking towards Mukundbhai) Of course, he is a lawyer.

Mukundbhai : When there is a Guru, the disciple will most certainly reap full benefit.

Mataji : You must take on a Guru so that you may be properly chastised. You will have to undergo punishment.

Mukundbhai : I am prepared to suffer punishment but I shall not count beads. Let the Guru do *sādhana* on our behalf !

Mataji : The Guru does perform *sādhana*, just as Balmukunda carries out his japa.

Mukundbhai : Suppose I don't ?

Mataji : The Guru will certainly get it done. He will do so by chastising you. Those who deserve punishment will be chastised. The Guru resides within you in the form of the mantra and in the form of *śakti* (inner strength). Why has he taken on full responsibility for you? To kill your ego. He who is full of "I" will have to suffer punishment. When two people quarrel and blame each other, saying : "you have done this, you have done that!", how charming does this not seem ! Two egos fighting with each other. It is to conquer this ego that the Guru appears of his own accord. What you said is perfectly true.

Question : Who is the Being that makes us enjoy and suffer ?

Mataji : According to the Samkhya doctrine the Supreme Power is not the doer but only the enjoyer; whereas according to Vedānta He is neither doer nor enjoyer.

Question : The Wise say that the waking-state is but a dream.

Mataji : Where real Knowledge is there is only one Brahman and no second; there, everything that you see is nothing but a dream. There are two kinds of dreams : the dream of waking and the dream while sleeping.

Question : I have seen you today and also yesterday.

Mataji : That which should be seen has not been seen. If one sees really and truly there is no more question of today and yesterday.

Question : Is man free to do what he wants or is he dependent ?

Mataji : Pitāji will reply.

Swami Madhava Tirtha : In the field of *māyā* a human being is bound but in the spiritual field he is independent.

Mataji : So long as the realization has not come "I am merely God's tool", it is fitting to think of God in all one does. In the Upaniṣads two roads are pointed out— one appears pleasing, the other is for one's highest good. The road of pleasure should be discarded and the one that is truly beneficial adopted. Follow the line whereby you will know your Self. You gather wealth and bring up your children using your own capacity and energy. Apply this very capacity and energy to the search of God. Try to find Him. To realize Him is to realize your own Self and to realize your Self means to realize God. God is indeed ever in evidence, but there is a screen covering Him, so He is not perceived. To remove the screen it is necessary to perform action. The body has been obtained to reap the results of actions done in previous births. So long as one harbours desires and longings there will be birth and death—a "return ticket" will have to be taken. Do not proceed on the road of death. The poison of sense enjoyment acts like slow poison that will eventually lead to death. You have the heritage of immortality—ever remember "I am the *Ātmā*." Your duty is to realize "Who am I?" Those who have courage must choose the path to the Supreme Object of life (*paramārtha*). *Paramārtha* means Supreme Wealth—the wealth that is yours by your own right. In spite of possessing Supreme Wealth, why are you suffering like a beggar? Become a pilgrim on the path of Immortality.

(*To be continued*)

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(*To be continued*)

Vespers

J. N. Dhamija

In mystic light the earth and heaven meet,
The moon behind the softly swaying palms
Weaves a magic spell; the breeze is fresh
With rhythmic murmurs of a distant Shore
Vibrating echoes of Immortality.

I breathe sacred air of ages past;
A Peace descends, it is from Heaven
Softly, softly it comes on seraphic wings
All permeating. Transfigured and transformed
I stand upon the edge of Time and Space,
My being flows into the Non-Being,

Self submerging into the Universal Whole.
Waves subside, the ripples cease, Time stands still
The Space and sky dissolve into the Void Vast
A fathomless Ocean of disembodied Bliss.

Thy Grace Abounding, Immense and Infinite
It comes, it ever comes in floods of Light
It comes, it ever comes in floods of Joy
Supreme, engulfing and submerging all.

An Unknown Village Girl Becomes the Mother of Millions

Anil Ganguli

(Continued from the last issue)

Ma's thirty-sixth Janmotsava (Birth Anniversary) and farewell to Dacca

By the time the Mother of Shahbag reached Her mid-thirties, She had already become a celebrity known as Ma Anandamayi. Circumstances were shaping themselves in such a way as clearly to indicate that Ma was destined to be a great power in the spiritual sphere, not only of Bengal but the whole of India. However, Her *kheyāla* decreed otherwise. Eminence had come Her way unasked, unsought and almost inspite of Herself. She, as it were, submitted to it upto a certain point and then preferred retiring to a life of seclusion and solitude, at least for the time being. So, Her emergence as Universal Mother was delayed for some time. Ma's *kheyāla* is, indeed, a study in outward contradictions and its course unpredictable.

Under Ma's inspiration an atmosphere of religious fervour was created in Dacca. With Her as the central figure of adoration, a genuine spirit of brotherhood grew among Her devotees. The need for an Ashram was now keenly felt and one was founded at Ramna in Dacca in the year 1929; not by Ma but by Her devotees. Ma has no attachment for anything but She was the guiding spirit of the Ashram which

attracted many spiritual aspirants and seekers after Truth. In the town of Dacca Ma came to occupy the uppermost place of adoration in the minds of a large number of Her "children". She was now an integral part of their joys and sorrows and apparently interested in their well-being and adversity. So deep was their devotion to Her and so unwavering their trust in Her unerring judgment that many of them would not take any step whatsoever even in their worldly affairs without consulting Ma, nor move an inch without Her approval. For years they had been drinking deep the joy of almost uninterrupted *mātrisanga* (association with Ma). They also had the sorrowful experience of pangs of separation from Her for short periods which were, of course, few and far between. If and when Ma would be away from Dacca, Her "children" would live on the hope of Her *darśana* in the near future; they were thus steeped in the sweetness of divine love inspired by Her presence.

Ma's thirty-sixth *Janmotsava* (Birth Anniversary) was celebrated with great eclat in the Dacca Ashram in May 1932.* Continuously for twenty-one days there was a crowded programme of a variety of religious functions, including uninterrupted *kirtan* throughout the entire period. Ma attended each and every item and Her holy presence created great enthusiasm.

Like a presiding deity, She used to move about among the assembled devotees in Her gracious and soul-kindling way, thus creating a thrill of spiritual current which seemed to electrify the entire Ashram atmosphere in a mysterious

* *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Gurupriya Devi, Vol. II, Chapter XVII.

manner. There was, as it were, a flood tide of spiritual fervour which uplifted, at least for the time being, all who were present to unknown heights of moral and religious grandeur. Plunged in a sea of elevating joy, they experienced the very acme of festive jubilation. They were temporarily transported to the rarefied climate of a new world where they breathed the pure air of peace, love and harmony; and they became quite oblivious of the follies and foibles of their mundane existence. But they knew not that disenchantment was very near and reaction would quickly set in. They had not the least idea that they were soon to be thrown into the deepest depths of melancholy by Ma's sudden and abrupt *kheyāla* of departure for an unknown destination without giving any indication as to when She would return, if at all.

On June 2nd, 1932 at about 11-30 p. m. when most of the inmates of the Ashram had retired for the night and Bhaji had gone home, Ma's *kheyāla* prompted Her to tell Didi and others who were present that She would be leaving Dacca that very night. Her words, uttered in all seriousness and in a strange tone of solemnity, struck them dumb. Why this proposed departure? For what destination? For how long? Nobody ventured to put any of these questions. Nothing was disclosed by Ma. When She is in a sombre mood like this, speech is naturally inhibited among those who happen to be with Her. Inquisitiveness has perforce to be checked. What fell from Ma's lips was like an ultimatum - final and irrevocable - hence shocking. Everybody knew She meant what She said; and no power on earth could prevent Her from having Her way.

Ma made it perfectly clear that She would thenceforth wander about from place to place according to Her *kheyāla* and that nobody should try to stand in Her way. Her firm decision was a bolt from the blue, as it were. Bholanath and Bhaiji, both of whom had retired to bed, were sent for by Ma. Bhaiji had taken long leave of absence from his office with the idea of going for a change to some health resort. Ma just asked him, if he could accompany Her. He wanted naturally to know where She desired to go. Ma's cryptic reply was: "Anywhere I choose!" Bhaiji submitted silently to Ma's *kheyāla* without consulting even his wife. The atmosphere appeared to be surcharged with solemnity. Bholanath had a private conversation with Ma; and immediately after got ready to accompany Her on a journey of unknown adventure. An ominous stillness prevailed in the Ashram. The encircling gloom of midnight only deepened it. Most unceremoniously Ma left on foot and started walking briskly towards the Railway Station, accompanied only by Bholanath and Bhaiji with hardly any baggage.

The parting scene was almost heart-rending for those who had to stay behind in the Ashram. Ma's "children" at Dacca were overwhelmed with grief. The light in the life of Ramna Ashram went off all on a sudden. Ma's devotees had been inspired to feel that She was the closest of dear friends, the nearest of relations, and the most loved and adored personage one could conceive of; yet they were always inwardly conscious that Ma belonged to a world beyond their access. This remoteness was like the paradoxical "isolation of omnipotence".

Ma's sudden departure in this background shows that Her *kheyāla* is a study in contradictions. Perhaps the apparent

contradiction can be understood in the light of Ma's observation in a different context : "Sorrow comes in order to lead you to happiness. At all times hold Him in remembrance.* To lose all is to gain all. He is merciful and compassionate. Whatever He does at any moment is all-beneficent, though certainly painful at times. When He manifests Himself as all-loss, there is hope that He may also manifest Himself as all-gain."

"To pine for the ONE who helps towards the light of Truth is salutary, for it kindles the awareness of Truth. Verily, He is everywhere at all times. The endeavour to awaken to his real nature is man's duty as a human being. In the field of His Play even getting means losing. This is but the nature of its movement. Think of Him who cannot be lost. Meditate on Him alone, on Him, the Fountain of Goodness. Pray to Him; depend on Him. Try to give more time to *japa* and *dhyāna* (meditation). Surrender your mind at His Feet. Endeavour to sustain *japa* and *dhyāna* without a break".**

Ma is all love; but not in the sense in which we understand it. Normally so considerate and sympathetic, even indulgent, She can be relentless and inexorable, if so prompted by *kheyāla*. When She left the Dacca Ashram She did not evince any sign of sharing Dacca's pangs of separation. On the contrary, Her calm and composed behaviour suggested that nothing unusual was happening; She seemed supremely indifferent to the emotional disturbance caused to the ashramites. Inscrutable is the *kheyāla* of Ma Anandamayī, the Joy-permeated Mother.

* *Mother as revealed to me* by Bhaiji (4th Ed.) P. 151.

** *Matri Vani*, Vol. I, published by Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha

Seclusion in the solitude of Raipur (Dehradun)

Ma, Bholanath and J. C. Roy reached the Dacca Railway Station and according to Ma's *kheyāla*, tickets were purchased for a journey right up to the terminus. On arriving at the terminal station on the bank of the river Jamuna (the continuation of the river Brahmaputra beyond the point where it enters into the district of Mymensingh), Ma said, "Let us cross over to the other bank." Bholanath and J. C. Roy complied; it was not for them to make any reply nor to reason why. Ma's *kheyāla* prevailed at every step. The Railway ferry steamer took them over to the other side of the river, and the party entrained again for a westward destination, known only to Ma. On their way they visited some places in North India till at last they reached their journey's end and rested at a *dharmaśāla* (rest house for pilgrims) in Dehradun. The contrast with their life at Dacca must have been very great. Bholanath and J. C. Roy naturally felt a little ill at ease. To them the local people were strangers and everything appeared unfamiliar. But Ma said complacently, "Everything seems known and familiar to me!"

After a brief halt at Dehradun, Ma and Her companions trekked up to Raipur, a desolate place at the foot of the Himalayas. There, on the top of a small hillock stood a very old temple of Siva in ruins. The environment of the locality seemed frightening; it was a lonely tract not far from a forest infested with wild animals. A damp and ill-ventilated room near the Siva temple offered temporary shelter to the party. The cracks and fissures in the courtyard and in the dilapidated walls harboured snakes and scorpions. Not far from this place there was a belt of green woods dotted over by hills.

At Raipur, Ma used to live on boiled potatoes or a piece of unleavened bread (roti) and arum acquired by Bhaiji by begging in the surrounding villages. Here Ma's *kheyāla*, it seems, was to subject Herself to a life of abject poverty. Abruptly had She left Dacca, wrapped in only one raiment without even any thought of a second for a change. She was not in the habit of taking a daily bath. With Her dishevelled hair, unwashed sari and pale and listless appearance, She presented a picture of misery arousing pity. The funny impression created on the female folk of neighbouring villages was once described by Ma in Vindhychal when I was present. Certain rustic women, She said, who used to come to a canal close to the Siva temple, took Ma for an unfortunate wife deserted by her husband. Their idea was, added Ma, that the husband had renounced the world and chosen the life of a mendicant, and his wife, having gone half crazy, was pursuing him. These simple-hearted women sympathised with Her and offered Her advice; "Well, dear, go on repeating the name of Ramaji; but first take a bath, change your dirty clothes and practise cleanliness; otherwise you cannot expect Ramaji's mercy and blessing."

The Raipur *Līla* comprising Ma's *kheyāla* for austerity and renunciation started in 1932. Twenty-one years later it was my good fortune to be at the feet of Ma at Raipur and to hear from Her a vivid description of that chapter of Her life. The occasion was auspicious. It was *Vijaya Dasami*, (the day of immersion of the image after Durga Puja). The whole area had been inundated with mellowed moon light. Standing in the courtyard of the Siva temple, Ma was in a reminiscent mood. We all listened to Her, spell-bound. I asked a question :

“Were the austerities necessary for your spiritual uplift?” At once Ma said : “No” and then after a pause She added that the question of “uplift” can arise only where there are two comparative levels—that is to say, when a person rises from one level to a higher level. From what was uttered by Ma it became quite clear that in Her case there was no scope for spiritual uplift or improvement at any stage. The inevitable conclusion is that She must have been perfect since birth.

At Raipur Bholanath was mostly absorbed in *sādhana*; and Ma was absolutely free to be by Herself. Perhaps this was preparatory to what appears to us to be the next stage in the full manifestation of the budding mother in Ma—a stage in which Ma would no longer be in need of Bholanath either for Her appearance in public or for freely talking to strangers.

J. C. Roy, the Government Officer on leave, volunteered to act as a faithful attendant on Ma and Bholanath at Raipur. His unassuming dress and modest demeanour made him look very much like a menial. This fact created a problem for the local postal authorities. Notwithstanding frantic efforts they failed to trace at Raipur Mr. J. C. Roy, I. S. O., the addressee of certain important-looking letters sent by post by the Government of India. The fellow who claimed to be J. C. Roy did not look respectable enough to be the Government officer addressed on the envelope. At this juncture Bholanath identified J. C. Roy to the entire satisfaction of the postal authorities by giving out that G. C. Roy was the *dharma putra* (spiritual son) of Ma and himself. Thence forward J. C. Roy came to be known as “Bhaiji” (elder brother) of all “children” of Ma.

